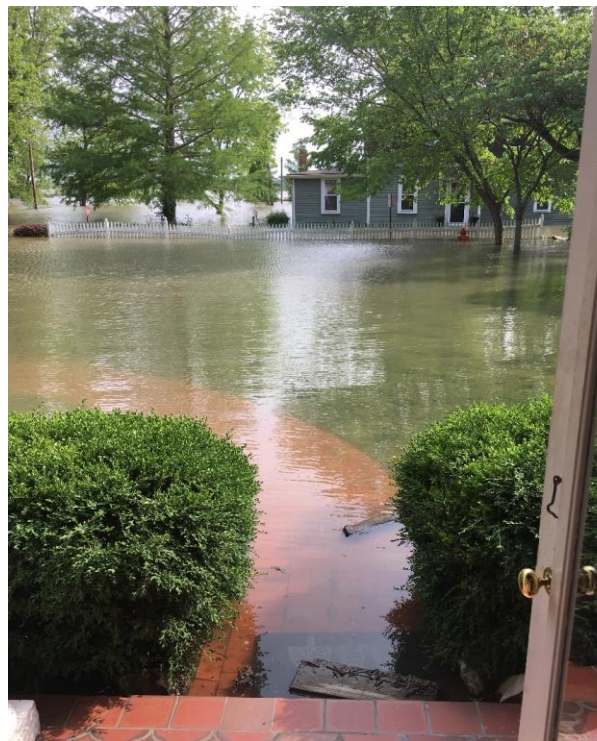




The 2019 Flood in Elsah An Unwelcome Visitor

By Jane Pfeifer

Our recent flood visited early and stayed a long time. Starting in early May, I checked the flooding predictions twice daily at the website, “National Weather Service Advance Hydrologic Prediction Service.” (<https://water.weather.gov/ahps2/hydrograph.php?wfo=lsx&gag e=grfi2>). The Grafton gauge is close to Elsah and gives us a pretty accurate view of what to expect. However, it was still an emotional roller coaster ride of wondering



The
Unwelcome
Visitor
June 3, 2019

Photograph by
Donna DeWeese

whether it would be worse than predicted. The flooding lasted from May through late June before the water was finally off Mississippi Street.

At the final crest on June 7, 2019 of this year’s flood, we all gave a sigh of relief; and, though we recognized it was not a good outcome, it could have been much worse. The year’s flood was about 3 feet lower than the 1993 Flood, which meant many fewer buildings were affected than our worst fears had anticipated. However, our building, Farley Music Hall, did have 14 inches of water on the floor for about a month. The damage was substantial and, after the flood waters receded, the smell in the building was very pungent. We felt we needed to take action to remove wet material to avoid mold forming in the building.

After the crest, we promptly filed our insurance claim on June 10 (three days after the crest). The adjuster came out quickly on June 17. On June 28 we decided on ServPro, a commercial cleaning disaster recovery firm, for the demolition and the cleaning of the building. In the meantime, we met with contractors and awarded the contracts for the restoration.



This year's flood was the second highest of the 10 highest floods recorded at the Grafton Illinois gauge location. Six of the ten highest floods have occurred in the last 26 years. This fact does give us pause, and we recognize that this is the new normal.

To further illustrate the magnitude of this 2019 Midwest flood, there is an article in the New York Times showing graphically, as well as in prose, the impact across the Midwest (<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/09/11/us/midwest-flooding.html>). They said:

This year's flood across the Midwest and South nearly affected 14 million people, yet the full scale of the slowly unfolding disaster has been difficult to fathom.

Since the previous major flood in 1993, Farley Music Hall has become an important part of the economic activity of the Village. We rent the building to the public. It is rented to both Elsah residents and others who have events in Elsah because they love the atmosphere of the village. Connie Davis, owner of the Green Tree Inn, is our rental representative. She shows the building, takes care of the contracts, and has the keys. Her work has resulted in a consistent increase in rentals each year. With weddings as part of her rentals, Farley Music Hall provides another venue for some of these modest and sweet weddings. During our flooding and the aftermath, Farley Music Hall was unavailable from early May to mid-October. This meant not only a loss of revenue for us, but also for Green Tree and other Elsah businesses.

Historic Elsah Foundation is deeply committed to historic preservation for both our own building and the community. It was only natural for us to reach out to

the Historic Preservation Office of The Illinois Department of Natural Resources. They responded with a visit to Elsah on July 2, 2019. The Village of Elsah met with them in an open meeting. Individual property owners were able to individually consult with them. HEF was fortunate to receive technical assistance from these professionals. They included:

Chief Architect, Carol Dyson, and Anna Margaret Barris (both from Historic Preservation Office, Illinois Department of Natural Resources), Frank Butterfield (Landmarks Illinois) and Steve Kelley (retired, but in private practice as Stephen J. Kelley, FAIA, SE, FAPT, Historic Preservation Specialist, steve@kelleyaia-se.com, +1 (312) 560 0697).



Photograph from July 2, 2019 in front of Farley Music Hall
Left to right: Carol Dyson, Anna Margaret Barris, Frank Butterfield, Jane Pfeifer (grandson, Nikko List) and Steve Kelley

This visit reminded us how expert advice is so helpful. Knowing our need to have immediate help in making decisions, we hired a consultant, Godfrey, Illinois architect, John A. Shortal Architect Ltd. He has been very helpful and professional. We learned of him through Terri and Mark Darr, long-time supporters of Historic Elsay Foundation, when they came to help us understand the structure of our building. Terri Darr served on our Board for several terms.



The restoration is still in progress. We are very fortunate to work with contractors who have worked for us or our Board members in the past. While each of our Board members has contributed, I would like to give a special “hats off” to Jeff Cornelius, our treasurer, for both working with our contractors and paying substantial bills as they came due, even before

we received our insurance claim funds. We also thank our local flood insurance agent, Joe Heneghan, who was quick to check with the insurance company when the payment of our claim was delayed.

Our first private rental was on Friday, October 11. While all the restoration work had not been completed, we were still able to use the building. Our next newsletter will show you our and the Village’s progress.

As we work on the cleaning and restoration of our building, we have in mind that we need a plan to avoid the consequences of flooding. We are investigating the cost and logistics of elevating or moving to higher ground.



The cost is substantial whether moving or elevating. On the other hand, our flood insurance cost in the last 6 years has increased 2.5 times and it will be even more expensive in the future. Our flood insurance claim has paid for much of the current flood damage repair, but not all. We anticipate paying at least \$5,000 beyond our claim. Another consideration on whether to elevate or move the building is knowing that repairs will become increasingly expensive when the building has major fundamental damages due to repeated floods.

Historic Elsah Foundation greatly appreciates the assistance, both technical and practical, that we have received during this period of renewal. In a special insert album, "The 2019 Flood," there are images of the buildings that had flood water in their living space buildings and the Thiele House at 2 Mill which was flooded in the basement. These were taken on June 8, 2019 by Kim Howland Photography. We thank her for this work. With our hiring Howland, we also obtained permission to use these images in our newsletter, provide a set to the State of Illinois and a set to the Village of Elsah. Individual property owners received images of their buildings, that were flooded in their living space and very close to their living space, for informational and personal use.

Great Rivers Land Trust (GRLT) provided a boat and a boatman so that Kim Howland could take these images. We thank and appreciate GRLT's donation of the use of the boat and for the assistance of Mike Lible, boatman, for this project.

We realize that we are not alone in our historic preservation efforts. You, our members and friends, are part of this process. Thank you.

Keeping the flood waters away and helping with clean up after the flood

We thank the following for their assistance:

Village of Elsah, trustees, officers
Methodist Church volunteers
Site visit by Historic Preservation
Office, Illinois Department of Interior
Great Rivers Land Trust
Contemporary Landscapes
The crew that fought the flood at the
Riverview House, including Alley
Ringhausen, Dennis Ringhausen, Patrick
Goetten, Mitch Goetten, Avery
Kaufman, and Ryan Baird.

Kim Howland, photographer
Mike Lible, boatman
Steve Brown
At Farley Music Hall:
Alley Ringhausen
George Provenzano
Bruce Robertson
Steve Brown
Jerilyn Lewitz
Patti Sontag for providing temporary
housing for Marjorie Doerr

William Husk, born 1838 – died 1910

An Early Elsay Township Resident

In 1985, Janet Patterson, a descendant of William Husk, wrote to Paul O. Williams at Historic Elsay Foundation, submitting an article for publication. At the time of the submission of the article, Paul O. Williams, our former *Elsah History* editor, had moved to California and was in the middle of another move. Fortunately, Williams kept the article and image in his records to do further research prior to recommending publication. After Paul Williams' death, his daughter, Anne Williams, kept his research. Recently, she transferred this and other materials to Historic Elsay Foundation. We thank her for doing this. For record savers everywhere, we send our gratitude to Anne Williams for knowing when something should be saved. We thank Janet Patterson for the submission. It remains timely.

I made only minor editorial changes in the following article, because I wanted the author's voice to remain in the telling of the story. There are some statements that need clarification, but I have left them as stated by the author. I verified the digital transcriptions of the Civil War record, the cemetery record and *Remembering Elsay*.

The Secretary of the State of Illinois website, <https://www.cyberdriveillinois.com/departments/archives/databases/datcivil.html>, lists William Husk as William Hurk. The record of the individual matches the copy (in our possession) of the discharge paper in the details, so my assumption is that the spelling of the last name is an error. The Jersey County Historical Society cemetery record shows William Husk, Civil War veteran, buried in Newburn cemetery. I also checked Beverly Bauser, *Remembering Elsay*, a transcription of articles about Elsay from the late 19th century. I learned that William Husk, like many Union Civil War veterans, was a Republican. He was first elected as a Republican township official in charge of highways (with several unsuccessful previous elections) and, in the 1894 election, he changed parties and was elected to the same office as a Democrat.

William Husk (1838-1910)

Researched and written in 1985, by Janet Patterson, his great niece



William Husk (1838-1910)
Photograph from tintype

*As Elsah was building
and growing, let us
not forget the Indians
who settled there.*

William Husk was a traveling woodchopper, married an Indian maiden, and they had one son, William Husk (1838-1910). They were farmers, had 1,230 acres in Elsah Township. The Indians were Potawatomi, living in Elsah, until the tribe decided to move to Wagoner, Oklahoma on a reservation.* The only ones to remain in Elsah were the William Husk family and a few others.

William Husk's mother was an Indian midwife who delivered many babies in Elsah. Doctors were scarce and she was well known and easily available.

I talked with Helen Yeothan and she described her uncle, John Reintges, as the first white child born in Elsah and his dad, Peter Reintges as building the stone houses in Elsah, and William Husk was the last of the remaining Indians.

William Husk fought in the Civil War and was honorably discharged in September 1864, having served three years. He entered the war at the age of 21 years. He was wounded at Mission Ridge. His records are kept at Springfield Archives, Springfield, Illinois.

William Husk married Minnie True and they had one girl, Mary, known as Molly by everyone. (Note) Minnie True and my great grandfather Thomas were sister and brother.

Eventually Minnie left Wm. Husk, taking their daughter with her (Molly was about 15 years old i.e. 1885) and where Minnie went exactly at that time or what she did is a mystery.

William stayed in his cabin in Dow, Illinois and worked shucking corn for a farmer in Dow. He walked to work on the railroad tracks with Frank Bechtold. William mainly stayed by himself and had a pet wolf. He never bothered anyone. He lived by himself for 25 years. William was a hard worker and always helped anyone if they asked him. He was never selfish in any way.

One day Frank missed him not showing up for work and a neighbor Louis Brewer checked on him; the dogs were barking loud, his cabin door open,

and the tea kettle was boiling. Louis knew something was wrong, and apparently found him lying in the creek bed in back of his house, the back of his head was hit and they found a cap nearby with blood on it. It was probably attempted robbery, but the would-be robbers found he did not have anything of value.

The county offered a \$200 reward for the murderer in the Jerseyville Republican, but never found him. I heard who did it. A party heard him admit on his death bed that he killed William Husk, but won't mention any name, as it is only hearsay. And, what can be done now? William was buried in Newbern Cemetery.

William Husk's daughter, Mary, was born 4-1-1870 and died 8-16-1959. She married Jacob Smith and had 5 children, 1. Walter, 2. Mabel (Reed), 3. Archie, 4. Ray, 5. Gladys (Vaughn). Only Gladys is still living in California.

Mary always talked about her father and was proud he was part Indian. She was never ashamed. She always carried a small Tin Type photo of him (which I duplicated).

Elsah has always been a very pleasurable place for me, and my children love it very much. At least once a month we always drive up the River

Road to see the beauty of it, and I have met many nice people. Some of the oldsters will remember William. I guess that is why I think he should be written about—it is history.

I'm proud of my heritage (75 years is a long time to still remember Husk). It still stands out. (1910-1985)

* It is generally accepted that the indigenous people were forced to leave Illinois by the United States government. See <http://geo.msu.edu/extra/geogmich/potawatomi.html> for additional information. However, it is also true that some indigenous people did remain in Illinois, but there are no recognized tribes in Illinois.

HEF News

Hosmer Williams Lectures

We are grateful to Liberty Bank for supporting our public lectures series. One of the spring lectures was canceled due to flooding. Janet Riehl's talk, "The Stories That Shape Us," will be rescheduled next year. This fall there are two lectures, both at Farley Music Hall at 7:30 pm. We thank George Provenzano for organizing Historic Elsie Foundation lecture series.

Thursday, October 17, 2019: "The Semples of Elsie," George Provenzano, Lewis and Clark Community College

Thursday, November 14, 2019: "Antislavery Activism on the Frontier: The Story of the English Prairie," Caroline Kiesel, School for New Learning, DePaul University.

The Semples of Elsie

A Presentation
by
George Provenzano
Historic Elsie Foundation

Thursday, October 17, 2019
7:30 PM
Farley's Music Hall
Elsie, Illinois

James and Mary Semple portraits donated by Rick Rydgren, courtesy of the Village of Elsie Museum

Village of Elsau Museum Photography Exhibit



*"Green Tree Inn" – 2019
Village of Elsau Purchase
Prize winning photograph
by Carolyn Schlueter with
the 2019 Theme, "Joy and
Discovery in Elsau"*

2020 Photography Exhibit theme is "My Favorite Window." Windows are the eyes of a building. So, for an historic community, windows have a special meaning and look. Of course, historic windows, or even close replacement windows, give value to an historic structure. We look forward to both historic and replacement windows being featured in this exhibit.

In addition to our prizes, (the Greatriverroad.com Prize, the Village of Elsau Prize, the Green Tree Inn Prize of a one-night stay for the winner of the Village of Elsau Prize), there is now a Youth Section Prize to recognize young photographers between 12 and 18 years old.

The Village of Elsau Museum will also provide a workshop for young photographers to learn about photography and participating in an exhibit. The workshop will be conducted by Marty McKay (2018 Greatriverroad.com Purchase Prize winner) and Karen King (2013 Village of Elsau Purchase Prize winner). Both of McKay and King have previously led photograph workshops for young people.

The workshop is on Saturday, January 18, 2020 at Farley Music Hall, 37 Mill Street, Elsau, Illinois starting at 10:00 am and finishing by noon.



*Last year's workshop - "on location"
portion*

For full details see <http://www.escapetoelsah.com> under Events.

Home for the Holidays



Photograph by Kim Howland 2017

Saturday, December 7, 2019 is our annual fund-raising event, Home for the Holiday. It is from Noon to 4 pm.

Imagine this scene: a picturesque historic village, nestled between the bluffs alongside the Mississippi River; an invigorating December afternoon; houses, churches, and businesses all decorated for the season; a horse-drawn carriage ambling its way along the street; and gracious homeowners opening their beautiful homes to guests coming for a peek into history. That's the scene every year for Elsah's Home for the Holidays House Tour. This year visitors will have an opportunity to see historic structures in Elsah, including private homes and other public buildings and businesses. Tour guests may purchase a ticket (\$15 in advance or \$18 on the day of the house tour) and receive a booklet with a photo and a brief history of each home and building on the tour. Starting October 15, tickets may be purchased on-line at www.historicelsah.org, or in person at Elsah General Store, Green Tree Inn, and Maple Leaf Cottage Inn.

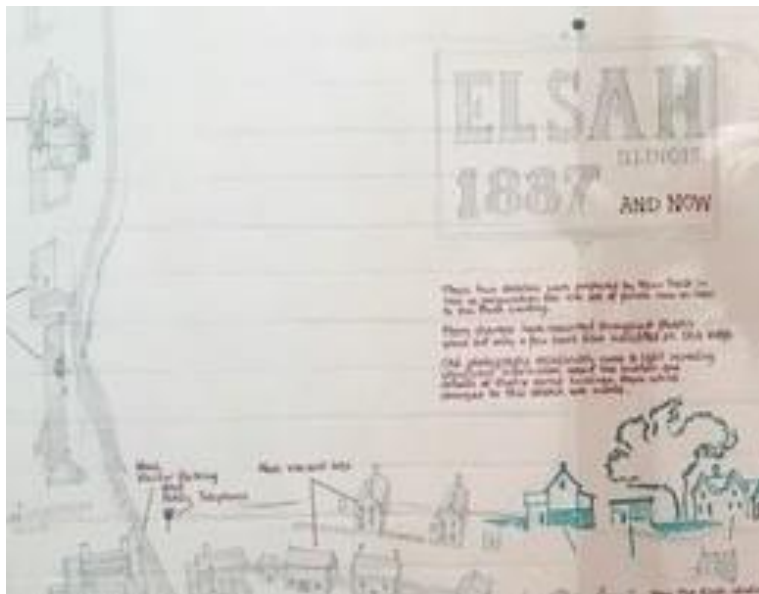
We thank Blair Smith and Jon Hosmer for their work on this committee.

Donation of a Glenn Felch Map

Recently, a Glenn Felch-drawn map of 1887 Elsah (in two framed sections) came up for auction. It was acquired and donated to Historic Elsah Foundation for the collection and occasional display or loans. The map shows a sketch of each of the houses in 1887 Elsah with a plastic overlay of notes in Glenn Felch's writing on the contrast between 1887 and 1965 (or later) after the map was drawn.

The map shows the detailed research that went into the Felch murals in the Village of Elsay Museum and the McNair House.

Historic Elsay Foundation thanks the donor for this special work.



Used with permission from Judith Felch, representative for the works of Glenn Felch.

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 Vice President: Jane Pfeifer
 Secretary: Blair Smith
 Treasurer: Jeff Cornelius

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Donna DeWeese
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 Jon Hosmer
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Copy editor: Joe Kaposta

Memberships for 2019

Patron: \$25 to \$99
 Supporter: \$100 to \$249
 Founders' Circle: \$250 and above
 James Semple Business Associate: \$100

US Postal address for memberships, donations and letters: PO Box 117, Elsay, IL 62028
 Email: historicelsah@gmail.com
 Website: historicelsah.org
 Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/HistoricElsah/page_map

The purposes of Historic Elsay Foundation as stated in the articles of Incorporation (1971) are: "...the preservation and enhancement of the historic buildings, architecture and culture of the Village of Elsay, Illinois, and the establishment of an education program to inform the general public of the historical and the educational values of the Village."